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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002078

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR CA/OCS AND SA/INS  
STATE ALSO PASS USAID/OFDA - GARVELINK, FLEMING, THAYER  
BANGKOK FOR USAID/OFDA - DOLAN  
GENEVA FOR NANCY KYLOW  
DELHI FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CE](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: TFX001: SITREP NO. 4 ON SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES,  
DECEMBER 31

REF: A. COLOMBO 2073 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. STATE 275844

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SRI LANKA  
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[1](#)1. (U) American Citizens: A total of 7 Americans are confirmed dead; 68 remain unaccounted for; 233 welfare/whereabouts cases have been resolved. One American consular officer and one Consular FSN traveled to Matara District on December 31 to visit hospitals.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Government Actions: According to the most recent figures obtained from the Presidential Secretariat, 28,508 persons were killed in the December 26 tsunami. On December 31 the President convoked a meeting with a number of ambassadors, including the U.S. Ambassador. She advised that the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) is formulating a comprehensive reconstruction plan, due to be released on January 15; international assistance is being sought to support the reconstruction activities the plan will outline. The President informed the ambassadors that members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are participating in district committees formed in the north and east to address disaster relief and reconstruction efforts, adding that so far cooperation has been good. (UNDP ResRep Miguel Bermeo, who participated in a meeting on disaster relief held at Tiger "headquarters" in Kilinochchi on December 30, reported to the Ambassador that the Tigers had shown an almost unprecedented willingness to cooperate.) In addition, the GSL has invited the LTTE to participate in the all-party committee being formed to address reconstruction efforts; no reply has been received thus far. The World Bank representative noted that Sri Lanka will receive approximately USD 100 million in emergency funds from the World Bank, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) representative reported his organization had approved a quick-disbursing loan for Sri Lanka and indicated a willingness to resume the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). The Ambassador conveyed his condolences to the President on behalf of the U.S. and noted that reconstruction efforts provide a significant new opportunity for both parties to the conflict to work together for the good of all Sri Lankans. He called for both sides to show flexibility in meeting the many challenges ahead.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Core Group Actions: The Ambassador will host a meeting with core group counterparts at the Embassy on January 2. Poloff discussed respective bilateral aid efforts with Indian counterpart on December 31. DATT and his Indian counterpart plan to go together to Sri Lankan Army Joint Operations Headquarters to brief on assistance offered/provided and to coordinate on a joint and combined air operations center to deconflict aircraft.

[1](#)4. (SBU) U.S. Actions: DATT, accompanied by four members of the PACOM Disaster Relief Assessment Team (DRAT) and one member of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), helicoptered over a coastal stretch from Colombo to Hambantota to assess damage and needs. This quick assessment suggests severe long-term economic consequences for the region and, inevitably, the entire country. Significant numbers of dead bodies still litter the grounds, while hundreds of cars, trucks and buses were observed still lying on their sides. With the exception of a few hotels, commercial enterprises, including stores, in Galle remain closed. Railway service remains unavailable farther than 30 or so km south of Colombo, disrupting the delivery of relief supplies and making travel to places of work more difficult for hundreds of Sri Lankans. Paddy fields and vegetable gardens in the south are completely flooded and littered with debris, rendering them unharvestable. Galle Port, which is the second largest commercial port in Sri Lanka, suffered serious damage in the tsunami and appears able to service only small fishing vessels.

15. (SBU) We understand there is still some discussion as to which JTF assets will be deployed in particular countries. We eagerly await clarification, as ability of our DRAT to develop a plan to address the reconstruction needs of this area will depend on what assets will be available.

16. (SBU) U.S. Actions (cont.): Members of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) are expected back in Colombo from assessments in the field late on December 31. The first planeload of relief supplies from DOD arrived early December 31. An OFDA planeload of supplies is expected on January 1. On January 1 the GSL will begin chairing daily donor coordination meetings (previously chaired by UN). In coordination with bilateral donors, international donors and the GSL, USAID is soliciting proposals to assist the districts of Matara, Galle and Hambantota. In addition, USAID has agreed with the EU to help support proposals to provide assistance in Ampara District. These activities are in addition to relief already being supplied to the north and east by USAID through the Sri Lankan Red Cross. USAID/OTI will respond to the emergency by supporting local groups in districts in the south, east and north.

17. (U) Agreement on Status of Forces: Ref B request was conveyed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 31. Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor this Embassy has a copy of the 1995 Agreement. Department is requested to fax Embassy a copy of the Agreement at 94-11-243-7237.

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MALDIVES  
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18. (U) American Citizens: No Americans have been reported killed in the Maldives. Two Americans remain unaccounted for.

19. (SBU) US Efforts: One DART member, one DRAT member and one emboff will travel to Maldives to meet with government officials on January 2.

110. (U) Agreement on Status of Forces: Embassy conveyed Ref B request via diplomatic note sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 31. Poloff spoke by telephone with Foreign Secretary Zakariyya on December 31 to advise him of the request. As of COB December 31, no response had been received from the Government of Republic of Maldives.  
LUNSTEAD